



The New York Public Library  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Octavia Butler papers**

1980s

Sc MG 966

Processed by Barrye Brown, 2019.

## Summary

**Creator:** Butler, Octavia E.

**Title:** Octavia Butler papers

**Date:** 1980s

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Purchased in 2019 from Swann Galleries.

**Abstract:** The Octavia Butler papers is a small collection (1 folder) featuring unpublished interviews with Octavia Butler, published articles by Octavia Butler, correspondence between Butler, Ernest Blackwell (former staff member at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), and Felicia Eth (Butler's agent), as well as Ernest Blackwell's handwritten notes related to themes of racism, racial stereotypes, and racial conflict in science fiction writing.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Octavia Butler papers, Sc MG 966, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Barrye Brown, 2019.

## Creator History

Octavia Estelle Butler was one of the best known African American science fiction writers, earning her worldwide critical acclaim.

She was born in Pasadena, California, on June 22, 1947 to Laurice and Octavia M. Butler. Butler's father, a shoeshine man, died when she was very young. Her mother supported her only child through domestic work. Butler's inspiration to enter the realm of science fiction and fantasy writing came at an early age, when she saw the film *Devil Girl from Mars* on television. It was at that point that she decided she could write a better story. Butler attended Pasadena City College and earned an associate's degree in 1968. The following year, she enrolled in the Screen Writers Guild Open Door program at California State University, Los Angeles. While enrolled in this program, she met fiction writer Harlan

Ellison who encouraged Butler to attend the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing Workshop, which she did in 1970. She published her first story, "Crossover," in an anthology of the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing Workshop. Butler published the following works over the span of three decades: *Patternmaster* (1976), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Survivor* (1978), *Kindred* (1979), *Wild Seed* (1980), *Clay's Ark* (1984), *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), *Imago* (1989), *Parable of the Sower* (1993), *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (1995), *Parable of the Talents* (1998), and her final novel, *Fledgling* (2005). In 1984, *Clay's Ark* won the James Tiptree Jr. Award; her short story "Speech Sounds" won a Hugo Award; and her short story "Bloodchild" won a Nebula Award. The following year, "Bloodchild" won a Nebula Award. Butler was awarded the MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" in 1995, making her the first science fiction writer to receive this grant. Butler moved to Seattle, Washington in 2000 and died from a fall outside of her home on February 24, 2006.

## Scope and Content Note

The Octavia Butler papers contain an unpublished interview and a one page summary of the interview, copies of articles by Octavia Butler: (1) "The Lost Races of Science Fiction", *Transmission*, Summer 1980 and (2) "Discovery, Creation, and Craft", *Washington Post*, 1983 May 22. Also includes correspondence between Ernest Blackwell (former staff member at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), Octavia Butler, and Felicia Eth (Butler's agent), and Ernest Blackwell's handwritten notes on novels with racial conflict as a main theme, as well as racism and racial stereotypes in science fiction writing.

**Arrangement:** Items are arranged chronologically.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

African American authors -- Interviews  
Authors, American -- 20th century -- Interviews  
Black author  
Science fiction -- Interviews

### Names

Butler, Octavia E.